

FOCAL POINT

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
DEVAL L. PATRICK, Governor
JUDYANN BIGBY, EOHHS Secretary
DAVID P GOVOSTES, Commissioner
WEBSITE: <http://www.mass.gov/mcb>

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COMMISSIONER DAVID GOVOSTES TO LEAVE AGENCY JULY 31, 2007

After forty-four years of state service, Commissioner David Govostes, of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind is leaving his post at the end of July. During his tenure as Commissioner, he guided the development of a broad array of services for a growing cadre of legally blind clients, who now number more than 35,000, including 3,000 children.

Secretary of Human Services, Dr. JudyAnn Bigby said, "For the past nine years, Commissioner Govostes has guided the Commission with a steady hand through difficult times, and his service has assured a healthy future for the agency. I wish Commissioner Govostes all the best in the future."

Commissioner Govostes led the expansion of supportive services for families; tripled the size of the After School Socialization and Recreation Program for blind children and adolescents; and was responsible for the development of an innovative Peer Empowerment Program for over 500 blind elders.

Among his many accomplishments were the establishment of a home - and community-based waiver that brought new federal funds to provide specialty residential services to deaf-blind consumers; the reorganization and expansion of the Technology for the Blind Program; and the evolution of a successful vocational rehabilitation program that, in the past several years, placed blind workers who attained the highest hourly wage among those who completed state vocational rehabilitation across the country.

Commissioner Govostes also made significant contributions to the overall

management and efficiency of the agency, automating the client record and service referral system, improving the reliability of the MCB Register of the Blind. As a public safety measure, Commissioner Govostes facilitated — through a regulatory process—a confidential mechanism for cross-checking MCB information with the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Among Commissioner Govostes' priorities were the expansion of services to children, particularly those transitioning out of high school, and the diversification of support for blind elders.

Among his many awards, Commissioner Govostes was honored by the New England Eye Institute for his commitment to public service where he received an award for leadership excellence at the institute's Boston Health Vision event at the Kennedy Library in 2005.

Prior to assuming the Commissionership Mr. Govostes served MCB as Assistant Commissioner for Policy Development and Medical Assistance. In this capacity, he administered the State Register of Blindness, mandated to certify legally blind residents of the Commonwealth, directed the MCB Medicaid Program and ensured that the agency complied with state and federal regulations. Mr. Govostes spent the previous eight years as MCB Regional Director responsible for the service delivery to the blind people of greater Boston. When coming to the Commission in the mid -70s, Mr. Govostes directed the MCB Medical Assistance Program.

Mr. Govostes' previous experience includes being a program specialist where he wrote medicaid policy; a supervisor of social services; a work employment and training specialist and a social worker all within the Department of Public Welfare, now the Department of Transitional Assistance.

In the 44 years Commissioner Govostes has served the Commonwealth, he has worked in human services, interacting with a wide variety of needy citizens. He is especially fond of the years he worked as a social worker in the General Relief Unit of the City of Lowell Welfare Department. He is often heard saying, "Those years were more valuable to me than all of my formal education." He regards himself as one who has great understanding of the poor and forgotten.

Commissioner Govostes has been blind for over 50 years. With his life and professional experience, he believes and has confidence in the ability of

blind persons to become independent and self-sufficient.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM BEGINS 4TH YEAR

In the spring of 2004, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind launched its new Summer Internship Program. The program began modestly by placing four of the agency's college student consumers in internship positions within the agency. The experience gained during this inaugural summer has allowed the agency to expand the program significantly. Internship placements grew to 10 during the second year with third year positions expanding greatly to 18. During this the 4th year the agency hopes to place 27 college students in internships. This tremendous growth in just four years has allowed students to experience first-hand the challenges and rewards of working in the same or similar positions they may very well be seeking upon graduation from college.

The Summer Internship Program offers college students the opportunity to develop professional skills in real employment positions which relate to their educational pursuits. The program also provides employers with an education about employees who have a disability and that these employee's skills are equal to other employees. The Summer Internship Program helps to open doors to others who in the past might have found the pursuit of employment opportunities more challenging.

This year's program began with a seminar for the Summer Internship Program participants that featured several professionals who spoke to the interns about not only their opportunities and potential but their responsibilities to their employers, to themselves and to others with disabilities who will follow them seeking employment.

The presenters at the forum included administrators and educators. Each gave a presentation regarding their personal experiences in seeking professional positions and how they succeeded in their respective roles. Speakers at the forum were: Dr. David A. Ticchi, supervisor of the School-to-Career Program at Newton North High School, Dr. Nick Racheotes, history professor and department chair at Framingham State College, and Dr. Bill Henderson, principal of the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston.

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Some of this year's employers include the Department of Industrial Accidents, The Secretary of State's Corporations Office, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Associated Grant Makers, Adaptive Environments, the Massachusetts State House Intern Program, Verizon, the Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, congressional offices and other public agencies and private employers. Some employers are providing employment opportunities for interns for the third consecutive year because the program benefits the employer as well as the student intern.

Student interns participate in the VR Program of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and must maintain high levels of academic standing to participate in the Summer Internship Program. If you are an employer who would be interested in participating in this highly successful program, please contact Randy Pinch at the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind at 617-626-7492 or 800-392-6450, x7492 or email randall.pinch@state.ma.us.

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